

Directors' Theatre in Greece: Stages of Authorship in the Work of Michael Marmarinos, Yiannis Houvardas, and Theodoros Terzopoulos

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“Directors’ theatre” in Greece came into full bloom in the early 1990s, when a combination of social, economical, and cultural factors rendered possible the establishment of a new sensibility in the arts scene of the country. Together with a variety of corroborative phenomena, such as the proliferation of alternative theatre spaces, the country’s intense festivalization and the infiltration of drama schools by acting and staging methods brought back home by artists who had spent several years studying in Western Europe, new paths and techniques developed in the performing arts, mostly with regards to the introduction and systematic application of a non-Realistic, decidedly postmodern aesthetic onto the stage.

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It was towards the end of the 1990s, when a self-proclaimed “alternative” type of theatre in Greece started to catch up with trends that had already been operating in Europe and the U.S. from the mid-1970s on. Both Theodoros Terzopoulos and Yiannis Houvardas had studied abroad,¹ transferring and applying their understanding of innovative European insights on productions which immediately created a sensation to the relatively uninitiated audiences of their na-

1. Terzopoulos trained at the Berliner Ensemble (1972-76), while Houvardas studied at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art (RADA) in London, also at the beginning of the 1970s.

tive country and which, almost instantly, put them on a pedestal, bestowing upon them titles as generous as “avant-garde,” “cutting-edge,” and “pioneer.” This was no accident: Terzopoulos and Houvardas, together with Michael Marmarinos, share an understanding of directing as an act of authorship, determined to shift the emphasis from traditionally inscribed narratives to open-ended, dynamic events, which defy standard perceptual codes. In fact, Marmarinos, Houvardas, and Terzopoulos have been at the forefront of experimentation with the very form of theatre, displaying throughout an extensive body of work, a stylistic consistency, a significant degree of control over the end product, an enhanced sense of aesthetics, and a strong point-of-view with regards to the birth, “meaning,” and reception of performance.

These directors also share the common conviction that a psychologically conceived portrayal of character and, in some cases, the Aristotelian conception of eschatological structure lessen the intensity of experiencing theatre’s scale and scope. For Marmarinos, bringing the outside reality into the world of the play is necessary: by cancelling out any comforting definition of selfhood and interrupting performance with all their turbulence, immediate cultural references ensure the timeless validity of any given play, irrespective of the time period in which it was written. Houvardas, on the other hand, is more concerned with keeping a distance from his characters and viewing the text with a necessary degree of irony, by radically altering the play’s original context. At the same time, Terzopoulos rejects the channeling of emotional energy within facile metaphors; instead, he wishes to liberate the elemental powers of the actor, who duly becomes an instrument of meaning, uncontaminated by superficial and ephemeral sensations.

Michael Marmarinos, Artistic Director of Athens-based Theseum Ensemble, has earned himself the reputation of a visionary who dares defy traditional forms of representation, by introducing in performance the element of improvisation and real time, thus rendering his spectators active *participants* in a shared event. He often likes to work from a place of “shapeless feeling” (qtd in Keza 2002, S24), looking for ways to structure story-telling around autonomous—yet also interweaving—fragments of plot. Working in Greece and internationally since the late nineteen eighties, Marmarinos has forged a consistent philosophy of directing: his assertion that he struggles to do theatre in an area where “mere theatricality is wounded by real need” (Arfara 2000), albeit abstract, ultimately suggests a rejection of what he identifies as a more traditional—“formal”—type of theatre, in which the intrusion of the unexpected and the chance element causes intense fear in artists and spectators alike. In his best-known productions, such as *National Anthem* [*Εθνικός Ύμνος*] (2004) and *Dying as a Country* [*Πεθαίνω σαν Χώρα*] (2007), as well as in *2004* (2005), *Akropolis Reconstruction* (2010), and his most recent *Faust* (2014), strategies of devised theatre—including the integration of *found text*, au-courant political slogans and updated slang, as well as seemingly unrelated songs and dance, together with emphatic physical enunciation and simultaneous action—interpenetrate with existing texts, in order to inject the performance with a sense of relentless contemporaneity.

In fact, in Marmarinos' take on Goethe's epic *Faust*, the action takes place on an empty stage, in a set-up vaguely reminiscent of a rehearsal space. One instantly recognizes some of the directorial strategies that have come to dominate experimental performance in the past fifteen years: tireless improvisations and rigorous physical activity, actors running around the stage to the point of exhaustion, an asthmatic delivery of speech, projections and abstracted lighting, all-round symbolism—such as the opening scene's fish and the closing image of the dog intercepting the stage, to name only but a few. Even though some of these techniques at times bring about an exhilarating mood of expectation, they, also, betray a deeper lack of trust in the ability of the text to communicate its truths through the very poetry of the language, without the director's recourse to the "helping hand" of para-textuality. On some occasions, the bits and pieces of borrowed (found) text, (see, for example, the legal proceedings of Margarita's trial) merely add more lines to a play which struggles to contain itself within a four-hour performance. The conscious or unconscious application of the post-modern and the postdramatic aesthetic is also manifest in the director's predilection for both a static (almost *fictional*) diegesis, often divesting the actor's delivery from an inner dramatic pulse, together with an overly descriptive, hyper-realistic quality in much of the movement. These methodological patterns have passed by ways of a legacy from Marmarinos to many younger generation directors, who display in their work a similar tendency to de-dramatize the action and to, by and large, de-psychologize the performance.²

In general, Marmarinos' work on the classics veers away from the immediate contextualization of action, character, and situation—a choice, surely, which stylistically separates him from Houvardas. His treatment of *Faust*, but also of earlier productions of canonical works (see Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (1998), Sophocles' *Electra* (1998), and Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* (1999)) reveals a desire to maintain the poetic and heightened nature of the plays, a property which enables them to "circulate" freely in various places and in different times, remaining powerfully relevant. That is why, the director insists, he is "not interested in modern things in tragedy" (Arfara 2000). Instead, Marmarinos is fascinated by what lies between myth (as fiction) and reality (as documentary), infusing the frame of each play with current direct or indirect allusions. This is particularly visible in projects such as *National Anthem*, *Dying as a Country*, and *Akropolis Reconstruction*, but notably more so in 2004, a venture conceived right after the Athens Olympic Games, aiming to capture the monumental event's social and emotional circumstances and ramifications. The director reveals that the idea of the piece was born during the days of the "final count-down, those [days] of our free-fall to point zero for the beginning of the Olympic Games, maturing right after, when

2. See for example, the productions *Late Night* and *Guns! Guns! Guns!* (2012) by Athens-based theatre company Blitz; also, Pequod's *The Double Book* [*To διπλό βιβλίο*] (2012) and Bijoux de Kant's *Civilization* [*Πολιτισμός*] (2013) and *Ramona Travel/ The Land of Goodness* [*Ραμόνα Travel/ Η Γη της καλοσύνης*] (2014).

the post-celebration sense of loss asked for some kind of continuation” (qtd. in Grammeli 2005, C05). Sitting around small tables sipping tea, the spectators bear witness to an assortment of physical activities that are either projected or executed on site, revolving around the structure and theme of the very Games themselves. Marmarinos understands the production as complementary to the feeling “which was or was not represented during the Games” (qtd. in Grammeli 2005, C05) and calls it a sample of “performance art,” celebrating the openness that the term allows him, in so far as defining a directing style is concerned.

More than anything, Marmarinos’ perception of his work’s affinity to performance art is intrinsic to the fact that it touches upon the ways theatrical time can be rendered “real.” After all, what appears to be a recurrent preoccupation for him is the way in which “reality” percolates into theatrical convention, by zooming into details that carry their own significance. Renunciation of conventional representation is also intrinsic to the notion of performance as a “journey,” an understanding that clearly informs the work on a literal, as well as conceptual level. For example, in his inspired take on Dimitris Dimitriadis’ *Dying as a Country* and *Insenso* (2012), the director literally takes the audience on a journey around the Athens festival premises, forcing them to be attentive to the rawness of their surroundings and enjoy their vulnerable interaction with a text enunciated outside the protective shield of a given theatre space.

Marmarinos’ view of theatre as primarily an art of awareness and involvement is expressed in his attachment to the idea of a community and in the ambition to turn actors into spokespeople for the disillusioned lot of our times. He attributes his attraction to the notion of a modern-day Chorus in its ability to unwittingly produce different forms and poetry (Patsoukas 2011). Nowhere is this bond better manifest than in the emblematic staging of *Dying as a Country*, written in prose in 1978: the entire production is configured around a Chorus of 200 persons—consisting of professional actors and ordinary citizens of Athens—who form a long line around the urban premises of the International Athens Festival.³ Clearly, the boldness of such choice is aligned with the desire to involve the city into the performance: actors, dancers, musicians, and common people come together, sharing not just the words of the text, but also, a sense of belonging, which is integral in good theatre. In this case, the idea of building up a modern Chorus by turning potential spectators into agents of action, albeit an old one, seems very apt. Circulating among spectators-turned-actors, Dimitriadis’ words become lived experience and shared history.⁴ The line of people trans-

3. Marmarinos likens the line of actors-participants with a Greek tragic Chorus. Although he originally hoped to stage the play with 2000 people, ultimately he settled with a much smaller, yet still impressive number.

4. In the director’s words: “The relationship between this historic-political and biblical text with the endless mob, this static procession of people, which seems to derive from the original texts of the Old Testament and goes on to today with no end [crea-tes] a spectacle “in situ,” inevitably unique, which can only happen once” (Bouziotis 2007). The author of the article is responsible for all translations from Greek into English.

forms into a serpentine tail, crossing the stage, continuing to the rear of the theatre, and back around, while snapshots of the action are being projected on a huge screen, and the script is embellished with a potpourri of cultural curios from recent Greek history.⁵ Yet, despite the local touch, Marmarinos, like Terzopoulos, is partial to a theatre that can speak across cultures; in fact, he often collaborates with actors from different parts of the world and his work has a truly international ring to it. The theory that the actor's body, his/her movement and gaze constitute a universal language, able to highlight questions of personality and mood, is not new. Yet, Marmarinos has discovered a unique way of combining in his work essential attitudes of "Greek-ness" with a broad trans-national quality. His insistence on themes permeated by issues of identity is telling, not to mention, profoundly touching.

Ultimately, Marmarinos seems drawn to writing that arrests "the oscillation between the personal and the collective," providing a kind of life documentary (Marinou 2007). Dedicated to the postmodern aesthetic, he is intrigued by a dramaturgy that can integrate coincidences, "the so-called life-giving, creative chaos" (Patsoukas 2011). His productions of *Dying as a Country* and *In-senso*, unorthodox in form and radically site-specific, underline the desire to break free from the confines that conventional theatre spaces inevitably impose on our perception. All the while, the big existential questions are there: the implied self-interrogation of "who am I in this world" is always present. In fact, Marmarinos tries to delve into the deepest strata of history and culture, in order to examine pervasive issues of identity, which run through time, affecting in similar ways individuals from extremely divergent contexts. In his production of *Akropolis Reconstruction*—a form-defying, post-apocalyptic epic poem written by Polish playwright-painter Stanisław Wyspiański in 1904—he has a handful of actors narrate their own country's story—in and out of a swimming pool—through dramaturgical stops at cultural landmarks as diverse as the Wawel Cathedral in Krakow, the Trojan War, the Old Testament, and the modern history of Europe. Following each distinct strand, we are struck with a welcoming feeling of belonging and personal connectedness to an inspiring chronicle of human destiny. The celebratory sense of sharing, admittedly, ties in with auteur emphasis on creating events, as opposed to staging plays; whether the director shapes a new concept out of an idea or a theme or interprets a great classic, there is always something that sets the whole thing into motion, creating an environment of immediate audience involvement. Surely, this is the power and the thrill about Marmarinos' work—it's always fresh and ever-inquiring, looking out in the world for inspiration and back to itself, for ways to put it to form.

Similarly to Marmarinos—whose theatre is often characterized by an ur-

5. Marmarinos often talks about his productions in terms of "meetings" or "ensemble gatherings," which carry within them a possibility of poetry (Millas 2012), being fundamental structures of democracy.

gency for things to be voiced, for the spectator to be part of the making of (theatre) history—Terzopoulos and Houvardas also operate as authors of the performance event, rather than mere interpreters of dramatic texts, composing work which is marked by an artistic signature both consistent and idiosyncratic. And while they shy away from the postmodern extravagance of Marmarinos' devised structures, they carry the seed of theatre's universal appeal within them. Clearly, in all three directors' work, Formalism, in various forms and applications, provides a vehicle for effective communication between the audience and the stage. Mostly applied through the image-making strategies of each director, it also establishes these artists as "international," true as it is that they have managed to avoid the trap of defining their work exclusively on the basis of a modern Greek linguistic, thematic, and visual idiom.⁶

Indeed, the pursuit of a universal Formalism, a conviction that theatre is not only image-driven, but also metaphor-dependent, is another element which unites Marmarinos, Houvardas, and Terzopoulos. It is no accident that all three directors stand outside of their generation: after having been established in the theatre for almost twenty years, they retain their own singular style, which grants them the privileged title of the "avant-garde" artist, notwithstanding the adulation of various followers and disciples, who try to reproduce their work. The presence of postdramatic elements in their productions is conspicuous in the ways language is used: twisted, turned inside out or made powerfully transparent, words celebrate their sonorous nature, transferring out to the audience meanings that lie beyond semiotic abstraction.

An acutely developed sense of stage iconography is also central, even though all three directors use stage imagery in very different ways. Controlled movement and stylized composition are cardinal: Terzopoulos' productions are encapsulations of painterly perspective, geometry defining the spatial and kinetic relationships among the actors.⁷ Marmarinos' sumptuous spectacles are also imagistic,⁸ while in Houvardas' direction, movement is exacting and deliberate,

6. There is an inherent danger in directors remaining fundamentally culture-bound; for one thing, if one's choice of material is defined by purely geographical considerations, such as would be for example the tendency to exclusively stage plays of one's own country, then both the appeal, as well as the scope of the endeavor would quickly exhaust themselves. Along the same lines, if the process of contextualization of any given play becomes too self-reflexive, returning back to the same political and cultural preoccupations dictated by the artist's own background, the end result would be less effective—domesticizing rather than "owning" the source text, in ways that would deprive it of both of its unique culture-specific and fundamentally universal impact.

7. See for example the production of *Ajax, the Madness* [*Αίας, η τρέλα*] (2004), in which a Chorus of seven actors configures the shape of a cross on stage.

8. In *Insensò*, the audience enjoys a highly sensual experience, bearing witness to a group of twenty one actresses performing the character of Livia Serpieri from Visconti's 1954 film *Senso*. In one visually stunning sequence, they all take off their dresses, to form—their backs to the audience—a composition that strikes a chord of Renaissance grace.

revealing the director's profound grasp of stage dynamics, especially in group scenes, where the mere geographical arrangement of the actors builds atmosphere and mood.⁹

Like the true Deconstruction enthusiasts that they are, Houvardas and Marmarinos repeatedly introduce in performance a mix-and-match of stage idioms, which often stand in oblique relationship to the text: music and dance often fill in for habitual indices of storytelling, such as dialogue. For one thing, the interweaving of distinct musical traditions helps Marmarinos add to the globalized style he's always opted for, while in Houvardas, the application of culturally-specific song is central to the process of re-contextualizing the action. Technology is also ubiquitous: microphones as well as video installations proliferate. For example, in Marmarinos' *Faust*, part of the exchange between the title hero and Mephistopheles is projected, whereas Faust's dissection of the fish at the beginning of the show is also zoomed into focus, when detailed onto a large screen. Similarly, Houvardas often has his cast speak on microphones, and in many cases, a Choir of actors blissfully singing away—an old time favorite for the director—is also given added emphasis through projection. In this respect, Terzopoulos is certainly the most purist among the three, his sense of Formalism never quite engaging digital mediation, but, rather, foregrounding the human body's capacity as an exclusive carrier of endless compositional transformations.

Yiannis Houvardas, former Artistic Director of the National Theatre of Greece, has become notorious for “tampering” with the classics, his productions stimulating heated discussions on the tempestuous relationship between playwrights and directors and on the seminal problematic of authorship and ownership of the text. Over the years, and having worked on a great number of plays, ranging from Greek tragedy and Shakespeare to Lessing and Chekhov, he has remained faithful to his process of contemporizing classics, keeping the inner core of them intact, yet transposing the action into a setting which thoroughly differs from the original. One of his most noteworthy productions, that of Racine's verse play *Bérénice* (2007), divests the classic off its historical cover, by situating the love triangle story in a midnight bar of the 1960s Rome, echoing Fellini on each Italian melody that plays through.¹⁰ Houvardas explains the backbone of his directing style: “Any references to historic personages, to Rome, to the Senate, subside to the background and function as a mere curtain in the spectator's ear. In front of the curtain are real people, such as the ones we could meet at a bar at 4 am” (2006).

Houvardas' insistence on re-contextualizing the action of canonical plays through and through yielded an original approach to Euripides' *Orestes*, produced by the National Theatre of Greece in 2010. The thought of translating the Chorus

9. See, for example, the singing sequences of *Sara* (2006) and *Uncle Vanya* (2009).

10. The production is interspersed with familiar tunes of the times, such as Umberto Tozzi's *Ti Amo, ti Amo, ti Amo* and Jacques Brel's *Ne me quitte pas*.

of young, curious, but ultimately inconsequential women of Argos into a group of international students visiting the ancient site of Epidaurus and gradually becoming drawn into the very fabric of the tragedy, seems ingenious. Arriving at the theatre, the students are confronted by Euripides' dramatic characters, involving themselves in a live confabulation with them, across time and myth. As they begin to "converse" with the ancient text, the young people eventually assume the collective role of the Chorus, actively participating in the play, while "the characters' problem becomes their own, the pendulum of crime dangerously looming over their heads" (Ioannidis 2010). This investment in the Chorus adds to the production's sheer theatricality, given that potential audience members ultimately mingle and merge with the tragedy's *dramatis personae*. This choice, which also affects the production's scenography,¹¹ is explained in terms of "re-framing":

[Conceiving the Chorus in *Orestes*] I thought: what if among those young girls, there had also been some boys, could [this Chorus] function as representative of today's generation, which has a very superficial relationship with ancient Greek tragedy, the ancient civilization, the theatre of Epidaurus, but also, with the political issues that the play brings forth? Which it experiences, but does not fully realize or analyze? . . . The Chorus enters the stage hyper-naturalistically. It does not stand out from the rest of the Epidaurus spectators. There is no choreography and neither is there any music. The two worlds are united through a modern code, but there is a slight difference: the protagonists are more stylized, abstract and poetic, while the Chorus is more everyday." (Georgakopoulou 2010)

The strategy of conceptualizing the original text allows directors room to move freely among seemingly incompatible time frames and mental associations. Houvardas has perfected the style, by researching his material so thoroughly, that the world he creates on stage seems altogether coherent and consistent, the rules of its intended perception having been laid out for the spectators from the very start. In his production of *Uncle Vanya* (2009), he has the actors sing soppy French songs and dance the cha-cha, whiling—and whining—away their boredom. The clinical set, which mirrors Christoph Marthaler's dislocated mental landscapes, is also instrumental to the overall undercurrent of mild despair setting into the scene.¹²

11. There is a clear separation between the orchestra, traditional "home" to the Chorus, and the "beyond," the backstage area, where the Chorus in *Orestes* enters during its initialization ritual. The dialectic between the two spaces is representative of the duality that exists between the actual theatre space, where actors turn into dramatic constructions, and the "scene behind," where all masks fall.

12. Piercingly cold in its emotional temperature, with big windows and leather couches, in which the actors sit all through the play without ever leaving the stage, the set conceived by Herbert Muraier encapsulates the sanitization of an upper-class institution/sanatorium/asylum of some unidentifiable European city of the 1970s, taking away the bitter-sweet aspect of life in the countryside, which is undoubtedly part of the audience's idea of Chekhovian mood.

Vanya is depicted more with ridicule than with sympathy, simultaneously alienated and alienating, his portrayal representative of the potential dangers of excessive distancing. The notion that, in so far as character construction goes, psychology needs to be totally obliterated, in order for raw reality in its starkness to prevail, is already becoming dated. Yet, removing the psychological element from Chekhov, indeed, demystifying all sense of character and mood in the name of being "innovation," does little for the performance. And while over the years Houvardas has started to warm up to his protagonists, depicting them in a more humane light, there are times when he returns sharply to his earlier obstinate impulses to punish them to caricaturization.¹³

Much as revision is integral to adaptation, the courage to own up to it is not always a given. Certainly, Houvardas has no qualms admitting to his unapologetic attitude towards the classics: "I've never really seen a classical work as *old*. I can only read it with today's eyes, try to see what's of interest to me, to those around me, to the audience. If it doesn't give birth to a world related to now, then I don't deal with it" (Loverdou 2006, C04). While re-contextualization is inherent in any critical revision of an old text, yet it is always important for directors to pick the new situational context carefully, to ensure that a strong concept will not simply produce something momentarily "clever," but will feel profoundly necessary, as well. It may be worth noting that in Houvardas' productions, the reconceived temporal and cultural frame invested in has sometimes little to do with the present-day reality of his own country; thus, one wonders if the perfect in execution set of metaphors which make up an autonomous universe on stage, can actually contribute to a more meaningful analysis of the circumstances that constitute the play ideal for an audience today.

Theodoros Terzopoulos' physically disciplined work sets him aside from the other two directors. Having travelled extensively and spent time observing different ways in which the human body can express liminal states of being much more eloquently than discursive speech,¹⁴ he has developed a rigorous system of training that can energize the "pre-thematic," "pre-aesthetic" (Sampatakakis 23) levels of understanding, and of embodying text. Amassing quite an extensive volume of material together with his theatre company "Attis," he remains faithful to the form he has invented, having transfused it with several elements from different theatrical traditions globally. Notwithstanding certain aspects of Brechtian technique still visible in his work—a legacy of his training at the

13. As for example in the production of *Sara* (2007), where Houvardas transfers the core of the dramatic action from Lessing's eighteenth century German domestic context to a timeless mid-western American motel in the middle of nowhere. Critics have noted how, even in the most surprising and supposedly dramatic turns, you can never fully empathize with the characters' condition, trapped as they are within the director's formalist stylization.

14. It is worth noting here that Terzopoulos champions the divorce of the theatre from literature in ways that bring to mind Artaud's redefinition of language as an act of incantation. He does not question the significance of words *per se*, but rather wishes to filter the speech that can enhance the inner rhythm of the text (Terzopoulos 57-58).



Scene from *The Persians*, dir. Theodoros Terzopoulos
Istanbul Festival, Epidauros Festival, 2006

Berliner Ensemble, and of his association with German playwright Heiner Müller—Terzopoulos has developed an aesthetic that controls as well as unleashes metaphysical energy, bringing us closer to the absolutes of the human condition, to what the director calls “inner knowledge, the knowledge of the human cell and the blood” (McDonald 208). His ambition is for speech to be lifted to a heightened level, in order to become a kind of “speech-pain” originating in the soul (McDonald 209). This quite apparent in the way he treats Greek tragedy (see notably, his productions of *The Bacchae* (1986), *Persians* (1990, 2006), and *Ajax, the Madness* [*Αἶας, η τρέλα*] (2004)). Speech articulates the need to alleviate the body’s tension, imparting an alternative way for pain to find its natural rhythm.¹⁵ Influenced by the formalist tenets of Tadashi Suzuki and Robert Wilson, Terzopoulos sculpts through his austerity of form a landscape of mythology, defined by the primal streams of energy that run through the body across time and space. Not only is the actor’s body an instrument of sound and movement, it also becomes part of the architecture, an element of scenography, shaping and animating dramatic and theatrical space, creating lines of action, and begetting emotion through sheer composition.

When addressing the stark magnitude of Greek tragedy, Terzopoulos always focuses on what he calls a “nucleus” of meaning, working around specific themes that surface in each play (such as, for example, heroism in *Prometheus Bound*

15. In fact, the very act of uttering sound in Terzopoulos has been likened to a “difficult birth,” which, once there, will generate a verbal explosion (Tsatsoulis 249).



Scene from *Prometheus Bound*,
dir. Theodoros Terzopoulos

or mourning in *The Bacchae*), instead of trying to “psycho-analyze” the characters to make them easily accessible to contemporary audiences. In this respect, emotional involvement is not achieved through the empathetic relationship of the audience to the stage, but rather, through the evocation of archetypal imagery and an Artaudian appeal to the senses. The driving force is now the energy that emanates from the performance and not the anticipated emotion as such. It is this understanding—shared with both Houvardas and Marmarinos, namely, that psychology-based drama is no longer a unique or viable alternative for today’s spectators, which leads Terzopoulos to opt for archetypes and for delving into the *themes*, rather than the *characters* of each play. Part of the conviction that adaptations give birth to “still-born babies,” Terzopoulos’s “refusal to adapt” is associated with a general abnegation of psychological drama, with its particular-case aesthetics:

I don’t do adaptation. Rather, I go straight to the archetypes; anthropomorphism, animal forms, these things. And in this respect, beyond lament and guilt, beyond mourning even, new vistas have opened up in my exploration of the form of tragedy. (Karali 2008)

For Terzopoulos, making meaningful theatre starts from the need to remember, to reclaim memory in a time of amnesia (McDonald 203), as well as to discover “the possibilities behind each word, each syllable, each letter, even” (qtd. in Macdonald 208) and realize them through ritual. The reason why his work is so vibrant is that at a time when most of the so-called “alternative” theatre actu-

ally fails to provide an original voice, reproducing *ad infinitum* naïve—if provocative and ultimately pretentious—paradigms its Terzopoulos’ art remains loyal to inner commitment to explore the fundamentals, to put out there what seems impossible to express. In many ways, Terzopoulos “meets” Marmarinos in understanding tragedy—and theatre in general—as an event, a collective act orchestrated by a Chorus that both suffers and learns.

And yet, Terzopoulos, as much as Houvardas and Marmarinos, has been repeatedly accused of reproducing the tired versions of the form he has arrived at, production after production. Criticism has pinpointed a style frequently bordering on mannerism, as though the director’s creative resources have been exhausted and he feels forced to resort to well-received technique.¹⁶ Although these artists’ work still remains for the most part compelling and influential, it is nevertheless subjected to the challenges every artist faces when confronted with the violence of accepting change. After years of experimentation and serious research, directors need to turn inwards and consider the imperative not only to keep polishing an all-too precious form, but also to dare eliminate it altogether, if necessary, remaining open to the idea that any text can in itself point to new interpretative directions, which will not necessarily carry the heavily semiotized burden of a thus-far popular directing style, or a “*passe-partout*” *mise-en-scène* paradigm.

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16. Criticism on Terzopoulos’ discernible style has been indeed ruthless. See Georgousopoulos: “In Terzopoulos, the mould (the form) to which the poetic material is channeled pre-exists; every time the material is poured into the same form, so that in the end the shape always remains the same. . . . Terzopoulos trains his actors in four or six stage techniques and then adds to them the words of Aeschylus, Sophocles, Brecht, Shakespeare, Dimitriadis, Beckett (to refer but to his most recent productions). . . This in art terms is called Mannerism, Academism, Conservatism, and often characterizes uneventful art. It does however have the asset of being internationally acknowledged and recognized” (2006).

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